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The Relation of the Church

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AN ADDRESS

[
DELIVERED BEFORE

Rhetorical Society of Rochester

ON THE EVENING OF MAY

BY E. G. ROBERTS

Prof. in the Seminary

ROCHESTER, N. Y.
ADAMS & ELLIS, 40 BURLINGTON ST.
1866.

the Church and the Bible.

ADDRESS,

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Rochester Theological Seminary

ON THE EVENING OF MAY 15, 1866.

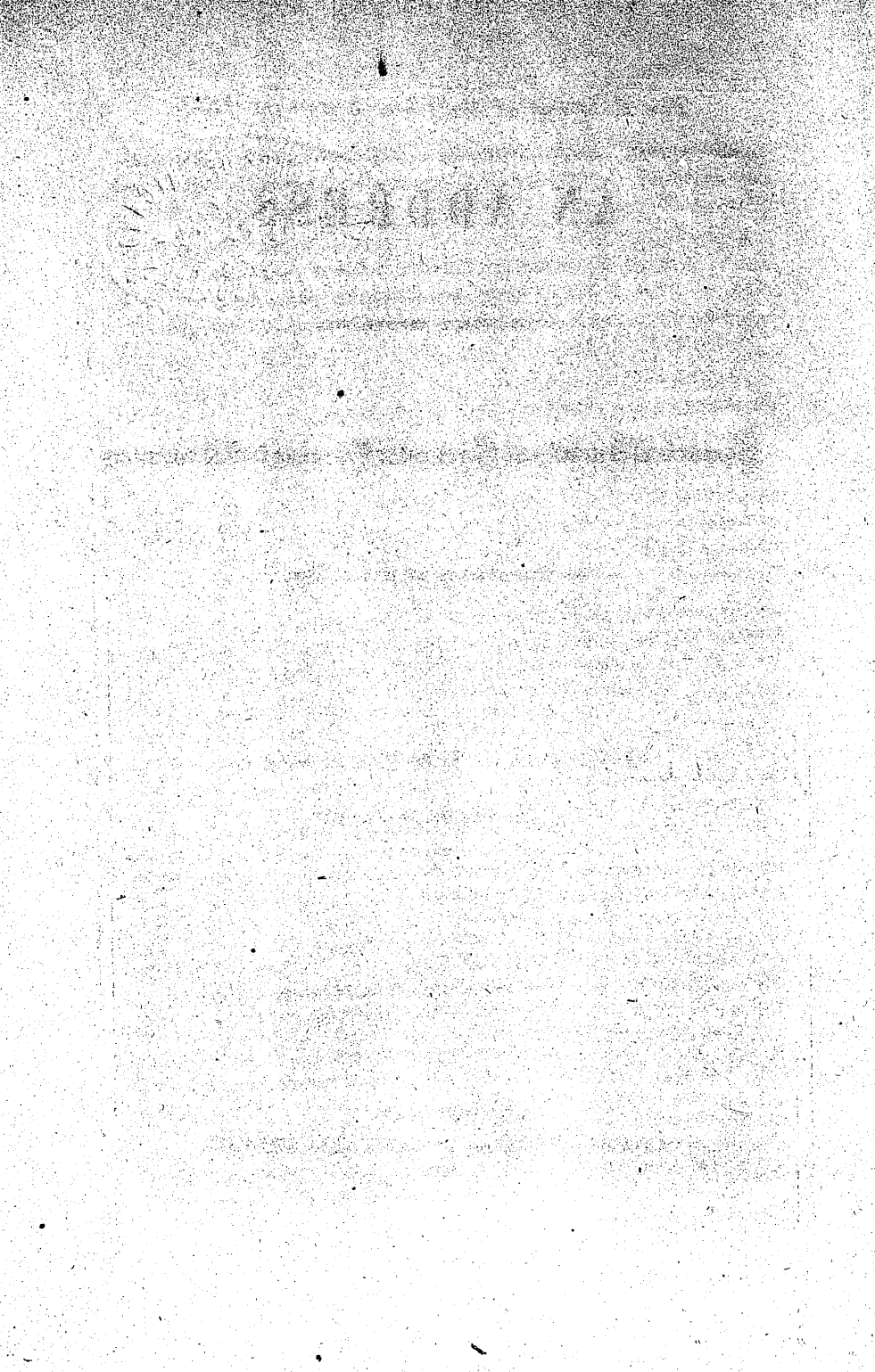
BY A. ROBINSON,

in the Seminary.

ROCHESTER, N. Y.

AT THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLISHER,
S, 40 BUFFALO STREET.

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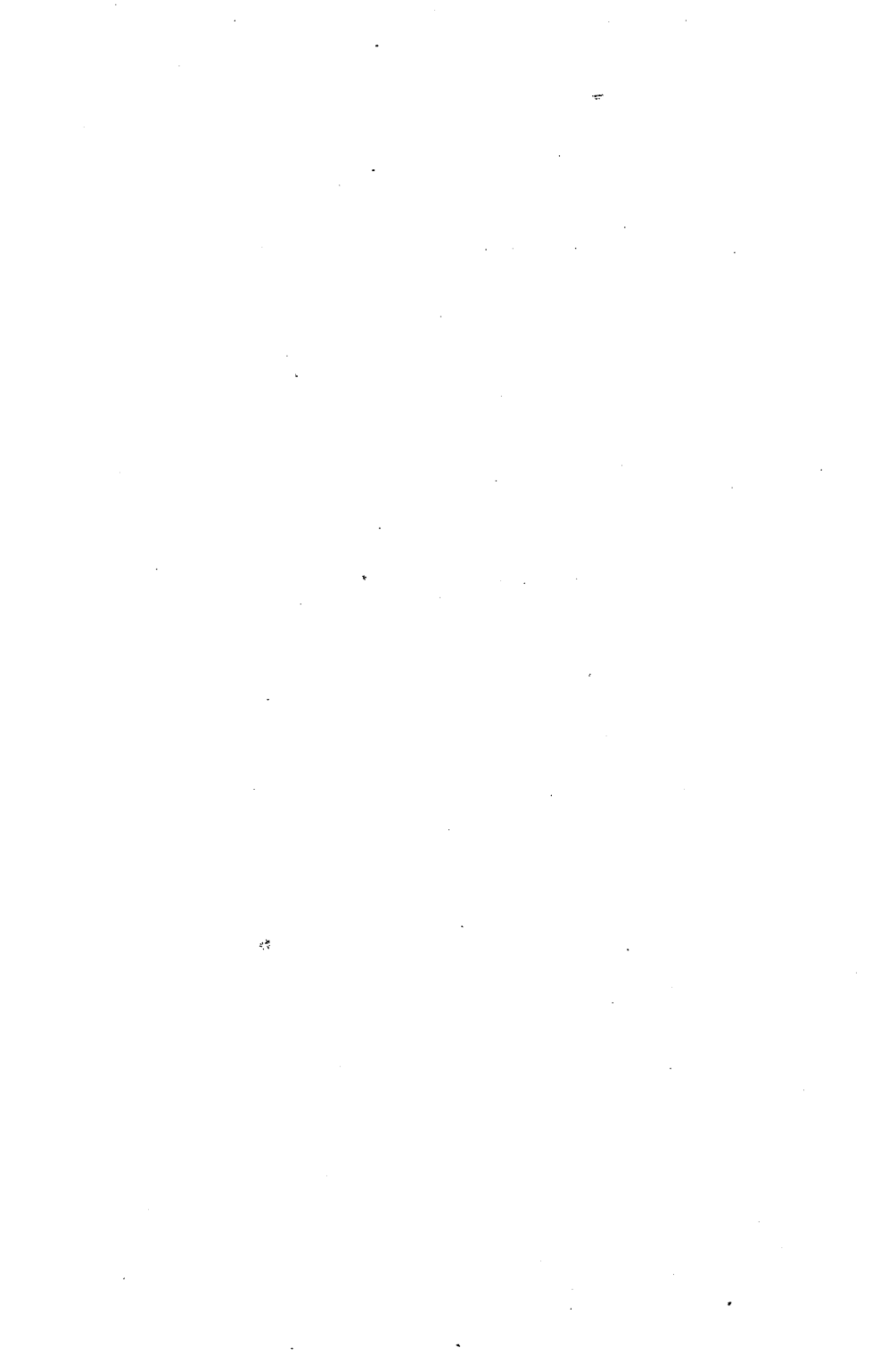
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PREFATORY NOTE.

It is proper that some explanation be given of the appearance of the following Address in print. It has no intrinsic claims to be published. The treatment of the subject is not what the writer would have preferred for publication. But there has been left him no alternative. It is printed in its present form, not from choice but from necessity.

During the last winter, a series of special Discourses was delivered in the Madison Avenue Baptist Church, New York, of which the following address was one. The Rhetorical Society of the Theological Seminary at Rochester, having failed to procure a speaker for its Anniversary on the 15th of May last, applied to the writer to address them, expressing at the same time a desire for a repetition of the discourse that had been delivered in New York. This invitation and desire were complied with. The discourse, which had not been written out, was subjected to such slight changes of introduction and phraseology as were requisite to give it an appropriateness to the occasion, and was delivered as an anniversary address.

A report of the address, made by one of the local editors of the *Evening Express*, of Rochester, was published in that paper. This report occupied one and two-thirds large sized columns, and was more accurate than such reports in the daily papers usually are. Nine days after its publication an anonymous communication in the *Express* demanded to know "if the author had no complaint to make of reportorial blundering, or of the proverbial and preposterous misconceptions of the daily press on theological questions" (!) and concluded with the contemptuous threat that, if the report was not repudiated, "then, indeed, it must be held and treated hereabouts as the Baptist view of the Christian religion." The communication, said to have been written by a rector of one of the Episcopal churches, of Rochester, gave what purported to be "extracts" from the report.

These extracts, to say nothing of the supercilious tone of remarks that accompanied them, were *garbled*, in the worst sense of the word. The sentences were all torn from their qualifying and explanatory connections, and *italicised* to give such interpretation as best suited the writer's purposes; several of them were mutilated, and one was grossly falsified by the substitution of the word "Bible" for "Church." These mutilated extracts from this Episcopal *anonyme*, were inserted May 31st, in the columns of the *Examiner and Chronicle*, of New York, and afterwards repeatedly referred to by its editor, sometimes as the "report" of the address, and sometimes as "extracts." The same paper has also asserted that it knows of *ministers* who heard the discourse (in New York), and regarded it as heretical. The reader will thus see that the author of the address was left no alternative but to print it.

He has been careful in writing out the address to give every sentiment that has been objected to, precisely as it was delivered. He thinks the only variation will be found to be in that difference in the construction of sentences, which always exists between a spoken style and a written one. In one or two minor particulars the printed address differs from the spoken one. It having been asserted in the *Examiner* that the discourse, as delivered in Madison Avenue Church, was regarded as heretical, it has been necessary to print all that was said in both places; and, as the discourse in Madison Avenue required one hour and twenty minutes of rapid utterance for its delivery, while the Rochester address occupied but about one hour, the address as printed is necessarily more amplified than it was as spoken; but the reader will understand that amplification of thought is not modification. The first and second concluding reflections as printed, were in the condensed spoken form, grouped under the third general head. With these minor differences, the address is printed just as it was delivered. If its sentiments are heretical, so be it; they are the writer's, and he alone is responsible for them.

One word about the delay in publishing the address. The clamor about it began early in June. The author, in his suspense, thought he would wait and see whereto it would all grow, intending to print early in July. Throughout July a severe indisposition unfitted him for all mental labor.—It is now submitted to a truth-loving public, with the confident expectation that the sentiments, however unworthy of print, are not so unsound as has been intimated, and with the humble prayer that they and the commotion of which they have been the innocent cause, may both be overruled by the Master to the glory of his name.

E. G. ROBINSON.

Rochester, August 13th, 1866.

The following communication needs no explanation :
DR. E. G. ROBINSON,

DEAR SIR,—

Certain reports and statements in regard to the address delivered by you before the Rhetorical Society of the Theological Seminary on the 15th day of May last, having appeared in the public journals, which are believed by those who heard the address, to be gross misrepresentations thereof and of the doctrines put forth by you on that occasion, the Executive Board of the New York Baptist Union for Ministerial Education, at a meeting held yesterday, appointed the undersigned a Committee to request you to furnish a copy of the address for publication, believing that the best interests of Christianity will be promoted thereby.

Rochester, August 8th, 1866.

GEO. W. RAWSON,
JAMES O. PETTINGILL, }
ALVAH STRONG.

Committee.

ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE RHETORICAL SOCIETY:

Societies like yours are supposed to be occupied with the forms of thought, rather than with its substance. Styles of address and methods of persuasion are regarded as objects of your attention, rather than the soundness of principles and the justness of conclusions. But you are not unaware that skill in persuasion is generally in proportion to clearness of perception. An argument is convincing in proportion as it is true. Your society has accordingly been formed, quite as much for the discussion of principles as for the application of rhetorical rules; for the ascertainment of truth, as for the acquisition of skill in its use. Your aim is of the noblest. Nothing can take precedence of truth. And it is noteworthy how impatient the age is of whatever, whether of tradition or of authority, would obstruct in the search for it. You have also doubtless learned, that, as in the acquisition of rhetorical skill, there is a necessary abandonment of many an old habit of speech; so in the search after truth, you must lay aside many a preconception and prejudice.* You may be almost ready to adopt the aphorism of Coleridge: "He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all." With this understanding of the aims and spirit of your asso-

*"Some persons who describe themselves in one sense correctly—as *following* the dictates of conscience, are doing so only in the same sense in which a person who is driving in a carriage may be said to *follow* his horses, which go in whatever direction he guides them."—*Archbishop Whately, in his Annotations on Bacon's Essays.*

ciation, let me propose for your present consideration : *The relation of the Church and the Bible.**

The subject is not a trivial one. What the relation is, is a question to which it is not a matter of indifference what answer is made. It underlies the whole broad domain of modern Theology. Not only does the ever renewing controversy between Romanism and Protestantism turn on it, but there can be no comprehensive discussion of any one of the great questions of Apologetics, which does not assume some sort of answer to it. Every new phase of modern Scepticism is turned towards it. The doctrine of Inspiration involves it. Church History from its very outset must build on some kind of theory of it. Dogmatic Theology, to be properly analyzed and intelligently defended in any one of its great cardinal doctrines, must distinctly recognize it.

The theme proposed, is also closely connected with the theological parties and controversies of our day. The religious thinking now prevalent, may be ranged under three general divisions—the High Church, the distinctively Protestant and the Rationalistic.† Between these three parties there rages a triangular conflict. The point in dispute is, to what, in Religion shall we appeal as ultimate authority? With consistent high churchmen of the Romish school, the Bible is a subordinate book—the Church, by which is meant the hierarchy with the Pope at its head, is sole arbitress in reli-

* The text of the New York discourse was the words of Isaiah, LIX ; 21 : "As for me this is my covenant with them saith the Lord ; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord from henceforth and forever." The introduction to the discourse was designed to recognize the Holy Spirit as the Divine Revealer of Truth or Author of the Bible and as the indwelling Sanctifier and Perpetuator of the Church. After this recognition, the discourse, as does the address, concentrated its attention on the relation of the two great *visible* factors of Christianity, the Church and the Bible. The criticism, therefore, which was reported as having been made of a deficient recognition of the offices of the Spirit in the Church, can be regarded as just, only by overlooking the restricted design of the sermon.

† The terms Ritualistic, Evangelical and Rationalistic have been used, and may seem preferable, to designate these parties ; but not all Protestants are evangelical ; and there are many who are evangelical and claim to be high church but not ritualistic.

gion. With inconsistent high churchmen of the Anglican schism (the most sectarian of all the sects*), the Church and the Bible are in a state of perpetually disturbed equilibrium. Distinctive Protestantism holds forth its traditional motto: "The Bible the religion of Protestants;" and in its use of the Bible it has often but too plainly forgotten, that one clearly marked and divinely appointed office of the Church, is to stand side by side with the Bible, as the visible Body of the invisible Christ, as the manifest dwelling place on earth of the saving power of the living God; and more than all, in its unceasing, and sometimes unmeaning iteration of its motto, it has but too evidently given some show of reason for Coleridge's blundering and most unfortunate charge of bibliolatry. Rationalism, rejecting the authority of both Church and Bible, asserts most positively the competency of man to sit in judgment on the authority of both. Its highest authority is human reason.

The growth of the last named party, the Rationalist, is one of the notable signs of our times. There is no disguising the fact of its rapid encroachment on the extremes of both the other parties. The number and variety of its accessions are startling, but indisputable. How much the demand both from Romanism and Protestantism for an unthinking submission to ecclesiastical authority has had to do with its progress, we need not now stop to inquire. We here have to do only with the fact of its progress. How shall it be staid? Shall we decry reason, and deny to it any office in religion? Shall we with high churchmen insist with renewed emphasis on the prerogatives of the hierarchy, and re-demand, on the pains and penalties of a future world, an unreasoning acceptance of canons and dogmas? Or, following the traditions of the English pulpit, since the birth of English Deism, shall we denounce all use of reason in religion, as leading to heresy and imperiling the soul? Or, obeying the latest rule pre-

* The zealots of different sects (including in this term the Establishment *pace* Archiepiscopi Cantabrigie) will have no Christianity without Sectarianism.—*Dr. Arnold of Rugby.*

scribed,* shall our reason guide us in examining the Evidences of a Divine Revelation, but its presence be scrupulously abjured, the moment we come to an examination of the truths with which Revelation addresses us? But to what does Revelation address itself, if not to our reason and our conscience? In the name of reason, for what was reason given us if not to be employed on the highest thoughts and the noblest ends that can engage our attention? Is it not enjoined upon us by the Most High, that we "*prove* all things, and hold fast that" only "which is good." Because we decline the invitation of Rationalism, to go behind Revelation and assert *a priori* what it *must* contain if it be from God, shall we therefore stultify ourselves by assuming that faith severed from reason, that belief unthinking and unintelligent can ever be anything else than credulity?† Nay, nay! for traditional Churchism and for traditional Protestantism, as well as for callow Rationalism, there remains but one safe and abiding resource, and that is the Church and the Bible—the Bible as understood and believed in, not by Hierarchies, Councils and Popes, but as understood and believed in, and scientifically expounded by the universal and divinely sanctified reason of the Church of the living God.

And by what has just been said it will have been made evident in what sense the words Church and Bible are to be used in this discussion. The word Bible may denote the letter of the canonical Scriptures, or it may be used in the

* See the Eighth Lecture in Mansel's Limits of Religious Thought.

† These few simple sentences have been magnified into a frightful bugbear. But every intelligent reader knows that they may be readily paralleled by quotations from accredited orthodox writers of our day. Even Mansel in his "Limits," feels it "necessary to protest against the pernicious extent to which the reaction against the use of reason in Theology has in too many instances been carried." Archbishop Whately says: "unless reason be employed in ascertaining what doctrines are revealed, humility cannot be exercised in acquiescing in them; and there is surely at least as much presumption in measuring everything by our own feelings, fancies, and prejudices, as by our own reasonings." Dr. Atwater in the Princeton Review says; "The principle that reason may legitimately pronounce absurd that which we are nevertheless bound to receive, renders faith impossible." See the admirable sentiments of Henry Roger, author of "Eclipse of Faith," in his volume of Essays entitled, "Reason and Faith," p. 349. These quotations and references might be indefinitely multiplied.

wider sense of a supernatural Revelation from God.* It is in the wider sense that we here use it; and it may also be said in passing, that throughout these remarks it is assumed that the Bible is a revelation from God by the Holy Spirit, who is at the same time the ever-indwelling Paraclete and Sanctifier of the Church. But the word Church has many and very different senses. With these senses we have here no other concern than to say, that it is not of the Church as distinctively visible or invisible that we now speak. Certainly it is not the visible organization represented and perpetuated only by its "fertile hierarchy" and ruled over by the "vicar of Christ," that is here intended. But by the Church, we mean that vast body of believers,† who, through all time, by whatever name distinguished, under whatever ecclesiastical constitution existing, whether blessed or accursed of popes and favored or frowned on by rulers, have adhered with fidelity to Christ alone, as at once their Savior and their Lord.

Now between the Church as thus defined and the Sacred Scriptures, there has existed from the beginning a relation as indissoluble as that of thought and being. In unfolding this relation, let us notice,

I. The relation of chronological precedence. The Romanist assumption is, that the Church preceded the Bible. §

* There is no intention to hint here a doubt of the genuineness of any part of our Scriptures, or of the right of any portion to its place in the canon. The simple purpose is to guard against the Romanist's too narrow use of the word Bible.

† "When I hear men talk of the Church, I cannot help recalling how Abbé Sièyes replied to the question, What is the Tiers Etat? by saying, 'La nation moins la noblesse et le clergé;' and so I, if I were asked, What are the laity? would answer, the Church minus the Clergy. This is the view taken of the Church in the New Testament."—*Dr. Arnold of Rugby.*

"Ubi tres sunt, etiamci laici, ibi ecclesia est."—*Tertullian.*

§ See Möhler's Symbolism, chap. v.; also Archbishop Manning's Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost, chap. iv. It is noticeable that both these writers, particularly the last named, are very careful to use the word Bible or Holy Scripture in the restricted sense of a *written* revelation—the canonical Book; whereas the Protestant sense is, a divine and authoritative Revelation—a Revelation embodied in the facts and principles announced by Christ and his Apostles, long prior to their reduction to writing. Of course no Protestant thinks of maintaining that the Christian Church did not exist till some portion of our New Testament had been written, and, least of all, till the whole had been completed.

The Protestant affirmation is that the Bible preceded the Church. The point is still in controversy. The latest writer on the Roman side, Archbishop Manning, has re-discussed it with notable vigor. But neither theory seems to be exclusively true. The Church and the Bible were co-eval in their origin.

The question may be looked at historically. We may view the Church in its widest latitude of meaning; we may grant what some have affirmed, that it antedated Moses—that its origin was with Abraham. In one view of it, it is easy to distinguish chronologically between the origin of the divine promise which Abraham believed, and the origin of that divine life in the heart of Abraham, which made him at once the nucleus of the Jewish Church, and “the father of the faithful.” In another view of it, the promise could be truly recognized as a revelation from God, and so become a part of the Word of God, only when, through the creative Spirit, the religious life in the soul of Abraham had made him capable of recognizing and avowing it as a promise from God. It was through Abraham inspired and Abraham renewed, that so much truth as was revealed to him and believed by him, was communicated to men. The truth and his heart, like seed and the soil, were prepared for each other. In him the Bible and the Church were co-existent and coeval.

Or pass we down to the origin of the New Testament and of the Christian Church.* Christ gathered his Apostles about him and imparted, as rapidly as their ignorance and prejudices would admit, the principles and spirit of the new Kingdom. Three years and a half the Lord of Life was their unwearied teacher. And with what results? Let us see. After two years or more had elapsed, after the Sermon on the

*We may here be reminded that the Christian Church from the outset had in its possession the Old Testament Scriptures, and that thus the Bible must have preceded the Church. But either the Apostles understood the Old Testament as their cotemporaries understood it—in which case they were of the Jewish Church, and were not the nucleus of the Christian Church; or else they understood the Old Testament as Christians now do, and their understanding of it, wrought into the New Testament, constitutes its radical distinction from the Old. The *Christian* Bible did not chronologically precede the Christian Church.

Mount had been delivered, the Transfiguration witnessed, and the coming Passion and Resurrection re-announced, we find the Apostles, their minds occupied with traditional notions of a temporal kingdom of the Messiah, in earnest dispute about their individual præminence in the new Empire. Another year passed; the last judgment had been depicted; the mysterious glory of their master had become more distinctly visible; and now we find two of the three disciples who had been admitted to the closest intimacy with their Lord, turning the fond love of their mother to personal account, and preferring through her the request that the first two posts of honor in the new kingdom should be promised to them. And so, again, after the dread scenes of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, even during their last interview with the risen Lord, we see in the question, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" how deeply their minds had been imbued with the gross notions of their times.

But granting now all that can be claimed of misconception on the part of the Apostles, admitting them to have strangely misunderstood the words, the spirit, and the aim of the great Teacher, yet who will venture to affirm that he had not imparted to them the saving power of his gospel? Surely he is a bold man who dare affirm of the Apostles, that had they died between the Resurrection and Pentecost, they must have died as unbelievers. But if the Apostles, with all their crude notions were essentially believers; if the one hundred and twenty disciples in that upper chamber were, to all intents and purposes, the true Church of Christ; then the true Church may exist with even very imperfect conceptions of its supreme Lord and of his truth; and more than all, the origin of the Church was not preceded, in any just sense of language, by our New Testament Scriptures. And yet, on the other hand, the Apostles did have some just conception of what the Lord had taught them, of what He had promised and of what He had done for them, and inseparably connected with their conceptions was their faith in Him as the Messiah, and that divine life which made them indissolubly His. Confused

and imperfect as were their views, they were not absolutely false. Within the facts and principles of which their association with Christ had made them possessors, lay, germinally, the whole system of truth now expanded and embodied in the New Testament.

This question of origin may also be looked at in another light. A slight clue to the right answer to it may be found in the relation of faith and regeneration in the individual believer. Some have maintained that faith must distinctly precede regeneration. A gracious renewal of the soul, it is affirmed, can be effected only by the instrumentality of divine truth; and truth, it is said, can only be effective in the soul through that apprehension of it which is denominated faith. Others, on the other hand, have maintained that faith is more an act or state of the heart than of the understanding; that the exercise of faith presupposes a renewed heart; that there can be no saving trust in a principle or a person with which or with whom we are not already in sympathy. But between these two explanations as thus stated, we may be unwilling to choose. It is very far from evident that faith and a new heart can be thus divided in their origin. It is plain that trusting and loving must always coexist. Christ can be trusted in, only by one who has already felt Him to be trustworthy; and He can be felt to be trustworthy only by one who is already heartily believing on Him.

Now what is thus true in the relation of truth and a new heart in the individual believer, is true of the relation of Divine Truth and the whole Body of believers. The divine life of the christian and the divine power of truth were a simultaneous communication. They sprang from one and the same creative act. They dwelt together in the person of Christ. They were communicated by one and the same process from Christ to his personal disciples. The mysterious virtue, the hidden but organific principle of life that went out of Him upon his disciples, transforming their hearts, and bringing them within the great brotherhood of believers, went only by the vehicle of thought. Strange as were the

misconceptions of the first disciples, gross as was their misunderstanding of the words of their Lord when first they heard them, and alloyed as was their earliest regard for Him, there was yet enough of truth in their conceptions and of love in their regard, to attach them unalterably to His person and His service. The justness of their conceptions and the purity of their love were always commensurate. Truth and Life, the Bible and the Church, were coeval and coexistent in their hearts. That Life was deepened and purified, and that truth was expounded and systematized at Pentecost; the Life taking to itself a body which it organized into fitness to its ends, and the Truth being gathered up into an organic whole, the Church and the Bible have descended along the centuries the united and indissoluble gift of God to men. And in this descent,

II. The Church and the Bible have been mutually preservative. Each has been exposed to its own peculiar perils, and each has ever found in the other its needed protection.

To the Scriptures there has been exposure to the peril of corruption of text and of canon. Heretical leaders began at a very early period to further their designs by mutilation and forgery. No merely human writings were ever subjected to such trials as the New Testament has survived. No such passions and motives ever prompted to a tampering with other authors, as have prompted to a mutilation of the writings of Matthew and Luke and Paul. No such ends as heretics had to gain, ever prompted to forgery in the name of philosopher or secular historian. And yet the New Testament has come down to us with a purity of text, which, with all the paraded variations of reading, is simply a marvel of accuracy.

There was also the peril of loss. Single churches were broken up and scattered by persecution. The Christians of whole provinces were hunted down like beasts of prey. The danger was imminent that, through fear or neglect, the precious and dangerous documents in their possession should be left to perish. Some of them seem to have passed into

oblivion.* Where are those "many" gospels of which Luke speaks in the introduction to his?† Where that First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians to which he evidently refers in that which is the First Epistle of our canon?‡ Indeed, it is natural to suppose that the Apostles, throughout the lengthened and diversified years of their trials and labors, with the care of all the churches on their minds, may have written other epistles of which no traces have been preserved. Is not the bountiful hand of the all-giving God everywhere scattering ten thousand seeds of which His watchful Providence preserves but here and there one for reproduction? Shall we wonder then, that out of the literature of the Apostolic period the watchful providence of the same bountiful God has preserved to us no more than is contained in our canon? Shall not our wonder be, not that any Gospel or Epistle of the Apostolic age has perished, but that just so many as, and no more than, we possess, have come down to us? Shall we not wonder that only four of those Gospels, each in itself a fragment, and written by men so dissimilar in endowments and so widely removed from each other, have reached us, and yet that these four should unitedly present us a picture so many sided and so faultlessly complete; and wonder, furthermore, that of the various Epistles, written by men wholly unlike in type of mind and in temperament, just so many should have been preserved to us as mutually supplement each other, and, in combination, furnish a totality of doctrine commensurate with the wants of the race?

But to whom was the work of selection and preservation committed? Certainly not to the Apostles. Even tradition

* So also of the Old Testament. "The Prophets composed many historical works which were not included in the sacred canon, and which time therefore has destroyed. Such were the books of Nathan the prophet, and Gad the seer, and others: 1 Chron. xxix: 29."—*Prof. Stowe in Bib. Sacra.*

† "Luke finds no fault with the basis on which the earlier writers rested. His own determination is placed on an equal footing with theirs (ἐδοξε καὶ αὐτοῖς).—*Westcott's Introduction to the Study of the Gospels.*

"Luke classes himself with those "many," and shows that he intended no disparagement nor blame to them, and was going to construct his own history from similar sources."—*Alford in his Commentary.*

‡ See 1 Cor. 5: 9-12. See also Neander's *Planting and Training*: pp. 102 and 103. Neander thinks that Four Epistles in all were written.

fails to ascribe to them this office. Nor yet was the delicate task entrusted to the unguided wisdom of any man or body of men. Doubtless the omniscient Mind that prompted the writings, controlled their destiny; but by what agency? Was it by bishops and popes, by synods and councils? But before these had appeared on the stage the canon had already been virtually completed. They formally recognized and endorsed what had already been determined by the great brotherhood of believers. The universal Church, ruled by its Divine Head, unerringly judging by a Divine instinct, quietly, slowly, infallibly, perhaps almost unconsciously, selected, preserved and carefully transmitted just so much of the sacred literature entrusted to it, as the Omniscient Mind saw to be needed by it.

To the Scriptures, on the other hand, has been assigned the reciprocal task of protection to the Church. Exposed to the perils of superstition and fanaticism, of corruption of morals and of clerical despotism, some authoritative guidance was indispensable to the Church's existence.

One of the first products in the heart of the christian is zeal in the service of his Master. But zeal gathers strength by expenditure. Reacting on itself it redoubles its own energy. Unenlightened, it becomes indifferent or blind to every object but the one of which it is in pursuit. Unrestrained by law, it speedily degenerates into superstition or fanaticism. As superstition, it taints all it looks upon and breathes blight and mildew on all that is beautiful in nature and in grace. It shrivels the soul, torturing it with diseased fancies and driving it before ghostly spectres. As fanaticism, it not only screams over its idols, it rushes on society in Quixotic attempts at the removal of evils which in human societies must continue remediless. It grows impatient at the delays of an unhasting Providence; and, vehement in its imprecations on-unhelping fellows, would pull down the heavens in its hot haste. The Bible only can exorcise its foul spirit. The months are not yet many since the clamor was loud and harsh against both the Bible and the Church, because the Church, studying

patiently the example of its Lord and the precepts of His Apostles, believed itself required to follow a line of conduct, in dealing with American slavery, which the followers of other guidance declared to be selfish and cruel. But the wisdom of the Bible has been vindicated; and the Church, leaving the uprooting of slavery to the stern hand of an avenging God, has been preserved to its appropriate offices of mercy.

Christianity, also, originates a new moral life in the soul; a life that, to be vigorous, must be progressive; and to be progressive, must be healthful; and, to be healthful, must be sustained by its native aliment. That aliment is revealed truth. Unnurtured by truth, its course is short and its end certain. It is not self-sustained in the human heart. It must have both inward alliance and outward support. Left to itself, attracting the humors of an unsanctified nature it speedily appears in unseemly and cancerous blotches on the character. Following the guidance of tradition, its way is short and easy into deadly formalism, or still more deadly Jesuitism.

There is also the peril of clerical tyranny. The organization of believers into permanent societies and the setting forth of the worthiest to be leaders and administrators of affairs, is both a natural requirement and a divine provision of Christianity. But history has shown an irresistible proneness in leaders to lord it over the led, and in the people to submit to their usurpations. Of this no ecclesiastical body has furnished its exception. The rulers of the Church, beginning with by-laws at first few and simple, gradually losing sight of the Bible as their only Book of Statutes, have come in due time to appeal to ecclesiastical precedents, to Canons, to Directories and Books of Discipline as authorities from which there is no appeal. Ecclesiastical traditions have usurped the place of the "life-giving Oracles" of God. The functions of the spiritual overseer have been changed into the functions of a privileged dictator. For the authority of Christ and his truth have been substituted the authority of

office and ecclesiastical custom. The government that should ground itself in love and conviction of right, has been perverted into a despotism that commands but gives no reason.

And to such usurpations and perversions of authority the one safeguard is now, as it always has been, the vernacular Bible in the hands of the laity. Revealed truth individualizes its reader—seeks out and confronts the personal conscience, announcing to the soul its one Lord and Master, to whom, and to whom alone, it must stand or fall. The Bible in the hands of the laity, whether in the valleys of Piedmont, in the glens of Scotland, or on the hill-sides of New England, soon diffuses an atmosphere which no clerical despotism can long survive. The Scriptures, though reaching the people only through traditional and liturgical interpretations in favor of priestly domination, must in due time generate an independence of both thought and life, which will brook neither despotism in the clergy nor lifeless routine in religious worship. It requires no prophetic eye to foresee the future of that ecclesiastical body or nation which, putting into the hands of its children, diligently teaches them to read that Book, the simplest and profoundest teachings alike of which, demand that every one shall reflect and decide for himself. The Bible has but just begun to reveal something of that mighty power, which it is yet to wield when with its divine intelligence it shall have irradiated the mind of the universal Church.

Nor need we look with misgiving to the future thus opening before the Church. Commotion and conflict undoubtedly await us. Even now no authority stands unchallenged, no tradition passes unquestioned. The Bible itself has been arraigned at the bar of criticism. But alas for the critics and the wisdom of man! Never, since the last Apostle laid down his pen, has the grasp of the Bible on the conscience of the Church and the world been firmer or more controlling than at this hour; never the moral life of the Church purer or deeper; never its type of piety nobler; never its aggressions

on the kingdom of darkness more decisive and rapid. And in reaching their present positions,

III. The Church and the Bible have been mutually interpretative.

The Bible has been progressively intelligible. Each portion of it, primarily addressed to the generation contemporary with its author, had yet in it a deeper meaning for the generations to come. Our Lord was misunderstood by his Apostles until after the miracle of Pentecost; and after eighteen hundred years we are still poring over the meaning of both the Gospels and the Epistles. To unfold that meaning, and by unfolding to develop its own strength and resources, has been one most important function of the Church.

The facts and words of Revelation, we are never to forget, are completed; are as immutable as the unchangeable One who speaks in them. But their meaning, like their infinite Author, is inexhaustible. No one generation can gauge it. No one formulary can exhaustively represent it. Certain formularies, we know, have been regarded by their adherents as completely embodying it. These have been appealed to as ultimate standards. Single dogmas have been set up as final statements of doctrine; as if any divine fact or truth could be exhaustively measured by finite minds; as if any single generation of an ever advancing race could fix on a final formula; as if there could be an ultimate dogma in theology.*

Let history here teach us. First came the Apostles' Creed, of the framing of which the Apostles were as innocent as we are. Then, after sharp dispute and bitter controversy came the Nicene Creed. In due time, and as the

*"From the objective Revelation itself we must discriminate the *subjective apprehension and appropriation of it in the mind of humanity at a given time*. (The italics are the author's). This last is progressive." "A dogma is simply a biblical doctrine, brought, by means of reflection, into a scientific form. * * * It becomes *symbolic* when it is adopted by the whole Church, or by a branch of the Church, as expressing its view, true or false. * * * The dogma, of course, has its development, and is subject to change with the spirit and culture of the age; whereas the Biblical truth in itself continues always the same, though ever fresh and ever new."—*Schaff in his Apostolic Church*.

result of fiery discussion, followed the so-called Creed of Athanasius. Ecclesiastical despotism then wielded its iron sceptre through dreary centuries, in which, what the Hierarchy dictated the Church unquestioningly accepted. At length the Reformation dawned; Protestantism ranged itself into the two divisions of Lutheran and Reformed; and for two generations Creeds multiplied faster than the generations of men.

Now of these Creeds, each had its peculiar defects and its peculiar merits. Each bears traces of the idiosyncrasies of its author and its time. Each is a measurement of the Christian intelligence and experience of its subscribers. And to the contents and form of each, all the intellectual and moral forces of the Christian centuries had contributed. Not a Christian martyr had died for his faith; not a Christian preacher had sighed and prayed and found his way into the life and liberty of the gospel; not a commentator had pondered the letter of the Holy Scriptures, but contributed each his share. Not a theological controversy had arisen, not a religious war had been waged, not a heresy had been propounded, not a new sect had been originated, not a Christian enterprise inaugurated, that did not contribute to that understanding of Scripture, and that elucidation of its truths, out of which the Creeds of Christendom have sprung, and which made their construction a necessity. Each generation has entered into the labors of all that preceded it.

Archbishop Whately, in one of his "Essays on the Peculiarities of the Christian Religion," discusses the question why the New Testament contains no creed or articles of faith. Many good reasons are given for the omission. But to the weightiest reason of all there occurs no allusion. That reason was one of necessity, rather than of design. A creed was omitted because, speaking reverently, it could not be written. One could be written, only when the Church, by discussion and trial and experience, had thought out, and felt out the significancy of the facts on which it had been built. A creed, or compend of doctrinal beliefs, is to the facts of the Bible to

which it must refer, what a syllabus of scientific principles is to the facts of nature whose principles it embodies. But compend and syllabus alike, could be formed on'y after long years of investigation, reflection, experiment and experience. From the beginning until now, the Church has been perpetually revolving in her consciousness the facts of Revelation, scrutinizing and praying over their significancy, and declaring her convictions in creeds and in ten thousand beneficent activities.

So, on the other hand, the Bible has been the interpreter of the Church. The Church is a unique institution, animated by a spirit and working by methods which are exclusively its own. Brought into being by omnipotent grace, sustained through trials which no institution of man could survive, the source and the nature of its inner life have been to the uninitiated an unceasing puzzle. Its own life is to itself a mystery, without the explanations that are furnished in the sacred Scriptures.

The great problem of Scepticism has been, as it still is, to account for the origin and continuance of the Church by some other means than that of Divine interposition. Innumerable solutions have been propounded; but the one explanation that outlives them all, surviving criticism and refuting it by its survival, is the Book that records the divine teachings and events amid which the Church took its origin. To man it is a mystery that the Church could be established only in and by the death of its Founder; that its members and strength could be increased only by the persecution and dispersion of its members; that its glory and power in the earth must ever be in proportion to its independence of the State, and its exclusion of all earthly reliance. He who would understand the origin and methods of the Church, must look for them in the New Testament Scriptures.

So also of that inner life which animates the Church; its explanation to the world is to be found in the New Testament alone. The same mind, alloyed it may be by the spirit of this world, but still in kind the same mind, is in the church

that was in its divine Founder and Lord. The zeal, the patience, the endurance, the self-sacrifice, the unshrinking devotion, the christian heroism that has characterized the Church in every age, have had their origin, not in fanaticism, not in tradition, not in memorials of the heroic, but in Him of whom we read in the Gospels, and who directed his Apostles both in their Acts and in their Epistles. The Church approximates in degree to the divine life of its Lord, just in proportion to the intimacy of its acquaintance with that Book through which the knowledge of His will is communicated and the energy of His life is imparted. It is in the Bible alone that we find explanation of the hidden life of the ideal Church.

And it is also by recurrence to the Bible alone, that the Church can understand herself. Her own inward voice is intelligible to her own ear, only as interpreted according to the sacred Scriptures. Her own consciousness becomes clear or confused, in proportion to her acquaintance with the written Word. The life that animates her, and the doctrines by which that life is both expounded and measured, are intelligible and defensible to herself only by recurrence to those Biblical facts from which they sprung. And thus in connection with this office of mutual interpretation, emerges at this point the

IV. Office of mutual corroboration of the contents of each others records. The evidence which establishes the authenticity of the Scripture records does not prove the trustworthiness of their contents. Sceptics who admit the genuineness of the writings, sometimes deny the veracity or the critical sagacity of the writers. The corroboration of Scripture facts, therefore, is no slight service, and this service is rendered by the Church.

Of the facts recorded in the Bible, none have been so virulently assailed, none so offensively scouted, as its miracles. The elaborate arguments once adduced to prove their non-occurrence, are now abandoned for the short and easy assump-

tion of their *impossibility*. So violent has been this hostility to a belief in them, that they have been regarded by some as even an encumbrance to Christianity.* But they are an integral part of it. The Gospel and its miracles cannot be dissociated. Christianity, if a supernatural Revelation, is itself a miracle, and supernatural phenomena were its natural accompaniments.

In the defense of miracles it is idle to parley—impossible to distinguish between the probable and the improbable. All stand or fall together. But select, if you will, that which, in itself considered, is the most improbable among them—the greatest and most wonderful of their number—the last and climax of the series—the Resurrection of Christ from the dead.* Inasmuch as the greater always includes the less, if the fact of the Resurrection can be established, the credibility of the whole series must follow. But of the fact of the Resurrection, the very existence of the Christian Church is incontestable evidence.† Without that fact the origin of the Church is not only unaccountable, but contrary to all known relation of cause and effect.

Picture to yourselves the Apostles and disciples when the sad truth first came home to them that their master was dead and buried. They had trusted in Him as the One “which should have redeemed Israel.” They were sure they had seen in Him the evidences of the great Messiah. All manner of diseases had been healed at his word; demons had fled at His presence; the winds and the waves had obeyed Him; universal nature had recognized Him as her Lord; from the heavens legions of angels had only waited His bidding to sweep down to His aid. And yet this Lord of all had

*The Apostles were witnesses of the Resurrection; and all the miracles wrought on, or by, them subsequent to the Resurrection were in attestation of that fact.

†Even Hase, who, in his *Life of Jesus*, makes strange havoc of most of the miracles of the Gospels, admits, “it cannot be denied that the early establishment of the Church at Jerusalem was based on faith in the risen Master, who, unless he rose from the dead, would be nothing but a disgraced corpse. Hence the truth of the Resurrection stands immovably based upon the testimony, and, we may even say upon the very existence, of the Apostolic Church itself.”

been arrested, tried, condemned, and, like any other helpless criminal, had been publicly executed. As if in an instant the whole fabric of their day-dreams had vanished. The extinction of their hopes was complete, their disappointment overwhelming. Their master dead and buried, they were themselves marked men. They fled in dismay each to his own home.* On the third day it was whispered, "The Master is risen." Gliding from their homes, they stealthily assembled.† Suddenly "Jesus stood in the midst," and "then were they glad when they saw the Lord." Slowly emboldened by the growing evidence that the Lord was "risen indeed," one hundred and twenty disciples gathered at last in open assemblage. Pentecost came, and the Christian Church was forever established. The disappointed and affrighted Apostles who had fled for their lives, now challenged rulers with their bold words, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." But for the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, there had been no Christian Church, and, but for the Christian Church, it had not been possible to establish his Resurrection beyond a cavil. As it is, no fact in history is so well authenticated as that "Christ died for our sins, was buried, and that He rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures."

The Scriptures, in return for this service of the Church, are exqually explicit in their confirmation of the contents of its records. Among their diversified records none is worthier of our attention than its Religious and Theological Literature. It is here that we may trace the course of its deepening life and its progressive apprehension of truth. Enter this literature at whatever point you choose, the indubitable signs of its origin present themselves. Follow this literature back from our day to its source, and its growth is found to have been organically complete. Its epochs are all known to us. Every foreign influence to which it has been exposed has been critically examined. The history of

* John xvi : 32.

† John xx : 19.

no literature was ever so thoroughly investigated; the origin of none more clearly demonstrable. No man disputes that its beginning was in the teachings of Jesus.

Select, now, any one of the great doctrines embodied in this literature; take one, if you please, against which the opposition has been most violent and uncompromising—the Doctrine of the Trinity. At no period of the Church does this doctrine, in some form, fail to meet you. Disputants have wrangled long over the terms that should express it, and diversified formulas have been adopted. The extraneous influence on the disputants are all easily traced; but the doctrine itself, like the life and consciousness of the Church, has existed continuously from the beginning.* Its origin was in the facts of the gospels. The Christians in Bithynia, at the beginning of the second century, singing hymns to Christ as God, were but the lineal continuators of that vast throng whose voice throughout the Scriptures, from Pentecost to the close of the Apocalyptic Visions, is heard resounding in ever swelling anthems of praise to Christ as “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” What the first Christians began and the Bithynian Christians continued, Christendom has perpetuated. Throughout the hymnology of the Church, like an unbroken thread, runs the recognition of the Divinity of Christ, and consequently of the Trinity of the Godhead.†

Starting, now, with the facts of the Gospels, the rise of the doctrine of the Trinity is easy and natural. Jesus on earth exercised the power to forgive sins. The forgiven heart, true to itself, instinctively worshipped the bestower of its priceless blessings. To Jesus ascended, the cry from unnumbered millions has been, “have mercy on us;” and, in answer to the petition, has been the bestowal of new hearts and new wills devoutly loyal and worshipful to the bestower. The facts of

*“This doctrine of God, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of Humanity in Christ, was essential to the Christian consciousness, and, therefore, has existed from the beginning in the Christian Church.”—*Neander's History of Christian Dogmas*.

† It is not meant that the hymnic recognition of the Divinity of Christ was a formal recognition of the doctrine of the Trinity, but it involved that doctrine, which was certain, in due time, to be formally stated.

the Gospel narratives and the facts of Christian experience as well, contain in the germ the doctrine of the Trinity; and by the same process might be vindicated from the facts of the Gospels every other great doctrine of the Church.* But inasmuch as truth vindicated is a truth made authoritative, we must here take account of another mutual office, in which

V. The Church and the Bible have coöperated in the enforcement of each other's requirements. Both were commissioned with the same message to men, but each was to work in its own sphere, in conjunction with, and in dependence on, the supporting power of the other.

Divine Truth was first revealed to men by acts and oral teaching. Of what was said and done, an authentic record by inspired men preserves to us a sufficiently extended account. That record is our Bible. But to that record it was impossible to transfer the freshness and vivacity of the original communication. Vividly as the Bible speaks to us through the eye and the imagination, it lacks the magnetic power of the living voice and person. That voice and person could be furnished to the world only in the living Church. He who once tabernacled in the flesh, "heard," "seen" and "handled" of men, on withdrawing to the invisible world imparted something of the Divine energy of His own person to the Church—to the visible representation of His presence on earth. What He said, and did, and suffered, recorded in language, the Church, re-echoing in its preaching,

* Other doctrines, particularly that of the Atonement, may in the same way be traced back to New Testament facts. And while alluding to this, the writer may as well add, for the benefit of those who have been so much concerned for his orthodoxy, that he believes implicitly and explicitly, 1. In the plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. 2. In the existence of God; in His Decrees and in His Active Government, general and special, of the world. 3. In the Fall of man, and in hereditary Depravity or original sin. 4. In the Divinity of Christ; in the personality and Divinity of the Holy Spirit; in the Trinity; in the Atonement to God for sin by the death of Christ; in gratuitous Justification through Faith; and in Regeneration by the Holy Spirit. He is also, and (not to offend the friends of "Liberal Theology," who have congratulated him so warmly on his intellectual and moral progress), expects to remain, an orthodox Baptist. If any one wishes further information, the attendants on his lectures, now scattered throughout the country, will doubtless give it freely; and his Lecture Room, he is happy to say, is always open to all comers.

re-enacting in its charities, and reproducing in its graces of Christian character, has preserved and will perpetuate to the latest time as a living force in society.

What effect would have accompanied a merely *written* Revelation from God to men, it is difficult now to conjecture. That some effect would have followed it seems impossible to deny. But what shall be the sustained and final effect of such a Revelation, interpreted and corroborated and enforced with all the emphasis and energy of an ever growing body of devout believers, it is impossible to over-estimate. In all her ten-thousand voices of spoken words, of acted benevolence and love, of matured virtues, the Church both enforces ~~the~~ the teachings of Revelation and foreshadows the coming consummation of their triumph. But in all the multitudinous agencies of the Church in the enforcement of those teachings and the proclamation of their triumph, there is none so effectual as that of the breathing man and the living voice.

The value of mere preaching has possibly been overestimated. Amid the universal laudations of the press, there has doubtless sometimes been an over glorification of the pulpit. The author and the editor, we are told, are now to rule the world. Types and not tones are hereafter to sway the minds of men. There has seemed to be no end to the rant about the "power of the press." And yet, with all the influence of the "secular press," which at present surpasses that of the "religious," there comes never a political campaign in which partizan leaders are willing to trust their cause to the pen alone. In the last appeals to the people the tripod is abandoned for the stump. It is the seen and living speaker, rather than the invisible and impersonal writer, whose thoughts reach and finally control the hidden springs of action. And what is here true in Politics, is equally true in Religion. It is by hearing, rather than by reading—by the living tongue rather than by the inanimate pen—that men are reclaimed to the service of God. The press has its place in the progress of the Kingdom of Righteousness, but that

place is not to be found in supplanting the pulpit. The earth may be made to tremble beneath the thunder of its printing presses, and Bibles be scattered in its highways and by-ways, and its surface be whitened with tracts, and yet the world move on undisturbed in its course unless the truth, welling out of the heart of living believers—the personal Church—is proclaimed “in demonstration of the spirit and of power.” The written truth of the Bible to be effective with men, must also become the spoken truth of the Church.

But we have said that the message entrusted to the Scriptures for men, has also been committed to the Church. The former is a “light to the path of man,” if he will follow it; the latter is a “light of the world,” which “cannot be hid.” Believers, by their very character as disciples of Christ, occupy, in relation to the rest of mankind, an isolated and contrasted position. They are not only the reprovers of vice and patrons of virtue, they are the heralds of salvation to men. Organized, notwithstanding sectarian subdivisions, into One Body by the spontaneous action of the law of faith that rules in them, their presence in society is, in one aspect, a standing rebuke of all who are not within the circle of their brotherhood, while in another it is a persuasive invitation to all to enter.

And to a delivery of their two-fold message to men, believers are prompted by an irresistible impulse. To have become a disciple of Christ, is to have been laid under the necessity of proclaiming Him to others. The law of love that binds to Him, is as inexorable as any one of the ten commandments. The consciousness of His presence and power in the soul is so immediate, that every true believer proclaims Him as by a spontaneity of nature. The sense of the justness of His requirements and the Divine beauty and love of His promises, so prevades His true people that they set Him forth to others with something of the emphasis and assurance of a self-contained authority. To that authority the world is ever flinging back its querulous challenge. And

to that challenge there remains for us but the one and unchanging reply : our authority is the Bible—the Revelation from God.

In its use of the Bible for the enforcement of its teachings, two methods present themselves to the Church. In the one, the Bible is appealed to as an objective, extrinsic document, the Divine origin and transmission of which to our day is to be duly authenticated ; a document, the warranty of which to be regarded as the Standard of appeal, is impliedly dependent on the evidence, historical or other, which can be adduced in its support. But unfortunately the authority of the Scriptures is by too many disputed in our day. The ever-recurring question is, *has* God spoken this which the Church quotes in enforcement of its message ? And shall the pulpit busy itself with its never-ceasing answer of the “evidences ?” Where then were the preaching of the Gospel ? Is there not a “more excellent way ?” May we not rather assume that God has spoken in His Holy Word, and trust more than some have done, in the power of the truth to witness for itself in the heart ? Surely, if the Church, giving itself in earnest to the study of its Sacred deposit—the Scriptures—and imbuing mind and heart with their spirit and truths, would address itself to the world with the assurance of intelligent conviction, the world would listen as to a voice that spoke with Divine authority.

The Bible has been too much regarded as a mere history of the past. It is rather an unchangeable mirror of the soul of the race. It is more a Revelation of things uncreated and eternal, than of things created and changeable. Truth has not been fitted to the soul, but the soul to truth. Man was created ; truth has been revealed. Let the Church speak the truth as it is in Jesus, and the world will confess that never man spake as does the Church. There is a power in that truth which no criticism can sap, no science withstand, no power in the universe overthrow. With the enforcement of this truth, the Church and the Bible have been jointly entrusted. And in the fulfilment of their high commission they will be found to be

VI. Justificatory of each others aims. The Bible is both retrospective and anticipatory—legal and evangelical—preceptive and prophetic. Its records begin with the origin of all things, and end with their final restitution. Towards that restitution it brings to bear all its double enginery of precept and penalty, of prophecy and promise. It opens before the race a stupendous destiny. To the realization of that destiny, every page of it, historical and prophetic, statutory and lyrical, doctrinal and hortatory alike, looks steadily forward. In its visions of the future, universal nature has been laid under tribute for imagery. Are its visions the dreams of enthusiasts? Are its aims chimerical and its promises delusive? Let the Church answer. The past and present must foretell the Church's future. Itself, under God, is what the Bible has made it.

The career of the Church thus far has not been faultless. None of its individual members have been immaculate. Its spirit has not always been pure, nor its piety always exalted. Bad men have corrupted its life, and designing ones betrayed it into depraving alliances. But after every abatement that can justly be made for crudity of results, for lack of achievement, and for perverted force, who can state the number, or measure the greatness of the blessings it has conferred on the world? Let the low level from which the nations of Christendom have been raised, remind us of the greatness of the power that has raised them. Let Christian civilization, confronting every other that history has known, recount to us the ten thousand offices performed by Christianity, every one of which has been in fulfilment of some Scriptural injunction. And, most of all, let the Church remind us of the sorrows she has assuaged, the serene peace she has imparted, the moral victories she has won, the heroic and saintly virtues she has cultivated, each beneficent office having been but a fulfilment of some Scriptural promise. But if such have been the triumphs of the Church in the past, amid obstacles that have steadily diminished in numbers and force, with

what rapidity may she not advance hereafter ; and, aided by the multiplied agencies now at her command, to what glory of achievement may she not attain in the future ? Do not the aims of the Bible find amplest justification in the deeds of the Church ?

The Church, also, as well as the Bible, has its well defined aims. These, comprehensively stated, are the realization of the ideal ends for which man was created ; they constitute in theological language, the salvation of men. They also include the incidental benefits that accompany salvation. The gospel sends its power into every avenue of life, reaching, restraining and re-directing, where it does not completely control the vital forces of society. It proposes also the subjugation of the whole world to the reign of Christ. It contemplates nothing less than a complete reorganization of society, the rehabilitation of the race, the construction of a new heaven and a new earth. In furtherance of its ends it appropriates, without reserve, the endowments, the acquisitions, the life even, of every one of its members. Addressing the world and its united forces of evil with the voice of authority but of love, and sending its messages and its messengers into every corner of the habitable globe, it summons every human being to a reception of the blessings it has to bestow. Such are the aims of the Church.

But to eyes that see only the present, these aims seem preposterous. The discrepancy between present achievement and ultimate purpose seems almost immeasurable. The instruments of the Church, the agencies at her command, are ridiculed as hopelessly inadequate, as the relics of an effete superstition, which will readily be believed in only by incurable fanatics. The true kingdom of heaven for man, we are assured, is the dominion of natural law ; the truly divine powers that give direction to human society and determine its destiny are its own inherent forces, statical and dynamical ; and the "good tidings of great joy" for which the race have long waited, are now announced in the "Gospel of Science." And to minds that see only what may

be read on the surface of history, these are plausible words ; the unearthly aims and instruments and promises of the Church seem shadowy and unreal. But let us to the "law and the testimony;" if these speak not according to the voice of the Church, it is because the hearer has no ear to hear and there remains no dawn for his darkness.

According to the Scriptures, there never was a time when the resources of the Church were such as human wisdom could approve. Surely, it was not from the motly and half heathenish crowd which Moses led up out of Egypt, that unaided man would look for thoughts that should shake the world, or anticipate that the Son of God himself should spring. What Invisible Mind was that which, in spite of the social forces that extinguished the glory of Tyre and Babylon and Nineveh, preserved Jerusalem and the Jewish Church till Shiloh came, and still preserves them, the lifeless but imperishable monuments of Itself. Who was He that, building His Church on the basis of an open confession of Himself, could fulfil, as He has done, the promise that against his Church the Gates of Hell should not prevail? And what resistless Power was that, which, taking to itself the little band of once disheartened and affrighted Apostles, to whom there pertained none of the adventitious aids of nobility, of high alliance, of wealth, or of philosophy and learning, could mould them into a body, whose light is now irradiating the world, and making known even to the hierarchy of heaven, the manifold wisdom of God. And where, save in the Bible, does the Church learn of that Triune Being, who, having planted His Church and preserved it through all the dreary past, still invigorates and expands it into fulfilment of all its glorious destiny. The Church, with the Bible in her hands, knows full well the Source of her present success, of her future triumphs, and of the final consummation of her hopes.

Thus the Church and the Bible, coëval in their origin, have coöperated in the fulfilment of their united and indissoluble offices to man. In the light of the sketch now given of their coöperation, we may understand something,

1. Of the nature and value of Christian Experience. Experience is the heart's testing of what is objectively presented to it. The Apostles tested or experienced the meaning and efficiency of the facts of the Life of Christ, and out of the fulness of their experience, and under guidance of the Spirit, they built up the Church and wrote their Epistles. Successive generations of believers, taught by the Apostles, have relived the Apostolic experience. Out of their Christian consciousness they have reproduced the Apostolic doctrine. Their experiences, though endlessly varied by personal idiosyncracies, have been essentially one and the same; and so long as they follow the Bible alone, they will continue to have "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all."

Now such being the nature of Christian experience, its indissoluble connection with Christian faith and its importance in Christianity become readily apparent. All genuine faith must ground itself in the heart's experience. No one ever truly believes in what he has not felt out and tested in his heart of hearts. A man's real creed is, and always must be, the measure of his experience. The doctrines that mould him are those that grasp his conscience; and to grasp his conscience, they must find his conscience in its hiding-place, and the finding it in its hiding-place is his Christian experience. Does a man doubt the doctrine of the Atonement or of the Trinity? it is because his experience has not taught them to him. They can be learned by him alone on whom Christ has put forth that Divine power which renews the heart, and by renewing the heart, enlightens the understanding. All true knowing of the doctrines of Christianity is conditioned on a hearty doing of the will that underlies and is implied in them. And, associated with Christian experience, there come before us in the light of our discussion,

2. The true office and authority of the Creeds of the Church. If a creed is a measure of the experience of those who have really adopted it, then it may be appealed to in determining the kind and degree of their experience. But

to appeal to it in testimony of the genuineness of their experience, is to pervert its office. If experience be the heart's response to the authoritative teachings of Scripture, then its validity can be tested by the creed only as the creed can be proved to be an echo of the Scriptures. Only by keeping in mind this distinction between the use of the creed and the abuse of it, can we shield it at once from abuse by invective and abuse by misuse.

There are certain men who never wax so eloquent as when declaiming against creeds. The thought of a well-defined doctrinal formula throws them into oratorical spasms. But do these declaimers ever remember what a creed really is, and at what cost of anxious thought, of painful inquiry, of spiritual struggle, of protracted controversy, of final sacrifice of all that the world holds dear, the contents of the creeds were worked out by those who subscribed them? The symbol that embodies the inmost beliefs of a man, to which, with *credo* on his lips, he signs his name, and if need be, stands ready to seal his subscription with his blood, is not to be tossed aside at the beck of the flippant talker. A creed is something for a devout man to look upon with feelings of respect, if not of reverence. Avaunt then to those theological vagabonds, those semi-agrarians in religion, who having squandered their own beliefs and convictions, are impatient that other people should so tenaciously hold to theirs.

But creeds have been abused by misuse of them. They have been perverted into crucial tests of orthodoxy. There is hardly an ecclesiastical body in Christendom that has been organized around an authoritative creed that has not, in testing the orthodoxy of its clergy, thrust that creed into the place of the Bible—that has not trenched on the divinely established relation between the Church and the Bible. In the Presbyterian Church an appeal to the Standards is final. If its ministers speak not according to the letter of the Confessions and the Catechisms, they are condemnable and condemned. In the Methodist Episcopal Church, the question

of orthodoxy is speedily settled by recurrence to the Book of Discipline. The Protestant Episcopal Church has gone still further. Originally organized around a Calvinistic creed, the thirty-nine articles, its Romish Liturgy, and its High Church Canons have come to be more authoritative than even its Articles. Requiring of its clergy, as a condition to ordination, the acceptance of its Articles, which nine-tenths of them contradict in their preaching, it will yet wink at any error sooner than at a repudiation of its prayer-book or a violation of its canons.*

The tendency of all ecclesiastical organizations that assume to themselves the title of Church, is to disturb the legitimate relation of the Church to the Sacred Scriptures, and to exalt the creed, the work of men, at the expense of the New Testament, the work of God. The letter of a creed may determine a man's fitness to belong to his sect, it cannot properly be made a test of his orthodoxy. Such use is an abuse of it.

And to this misuse or abuse is undoubtedly to be traced much of that waning reverence for creeds and all mere Church authority, over which some are disposed to lament. But it is idle to go about with lengthened faces deploring the loss of what can no longer be retained. Yea, rather let God be thanked that the new wine is bursting asunder the old bottles of tradition, and that Religion from being a mere unthinking acceptance of the language of man, however venerable from age or sacred from association, is becoming an earnest and scrutinizing trust in the authoritative word of God.

* As a curious illustration of what we have said, we cite the following sentence, italics and all, from Bishop Potter's Pastoral Letter of last year. "Just previous to Ordination, we deliberately write and pronounce to the Bishop the following emphatic declaration. 'I do believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the word of God, and to contain all things necessary for salvation; *I do solemnly engage to conform to the Doctrines and Worship of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States.*'" The reader will observe that the Episcopal clergy are expected to believe in the Divine authority of the Sacred Scriptures, but they *do solemnly engage to conform to* (according to the Bishop's after explanations) all the "Canons of the Church." For a specimen of what is meted out to the few "Calvinists" among the clergy of "The Church" who venture to put the Articles above the Canons, and the New Testament above the Articles, see the *Quarterly Church Review* for October, 1865. We doubt if anything worthier of the epithet *ferocious* ever appeared in a religious Quarterly.

3. In contrast with the sects just named, the Baptists have always ⁴presisted in a maintenance of the true use of creeds, and of the true relation of Church prerogative to Scripture authority. They have no one authoritative creed to whose wording all must bow, no ecclesiastical judicatories, no canons, no Directory, no Book of Discipline, and yet not a sect in Christendom is more completely one in its faith, more uniform in its ecclesiastical usages, or more prompt and rigid and efficient in its discipline. Presbyterians may hesitate and waver amid the divergencies of "Old School and New School," and before the perplexities of the question of "infant Church membership;" Methodists may pause and wrangle over the question of "lay representation;" and Episcopalians* may falter and stammer over their "baptismal regeneration;" but Baptists, in their convocations, have no questions of Polity or of Faith which they fear to confront and frankly to dispose of. Their churches, brooking no assumption of authority by Association or by Convention, hold themselves amenable to Christ alone; their ministers, acknowledging the right of no Association, or Convention, or any other ecclesiastical body to introduce them into the Christian Ministry, or to eject them from it, recognize themselves as responsible to the churches alone of which they are members; and each church, maintaining its independency, and aided by such counsel as in courtesy to other churches, it may choose to ask from them, judges of the worthiness of its own members and ministers.† By all true Baptists the voice of the Church universal is attentively heeded, but in

* Each of the three denominations named, in perfect consistency with their use of the word "Church," celebrates the Lord's Supper in its annual assemblages; and it is a curious fact that the American Board of Commissioners, now composed mostly of Congregationalists, observes the same ordinance in its annual sessions, the Congregationalists excusing their inconsistency by the fiction of an invitation from the particular Church in whose house of worship the session is held.

† The writer has been supposed by some to have inveighed, in these remarks, against the use of creeds by our churches. Nothing could have been further from his purpose. He believes, and has always taught, that every church should have its creed; and he sees no good reason why Associations and even State Conventions should not have theirs, if they do not misuse them.

every discussion, whether of doctrine or of practice, their final appeal is to the Bible and the Bible alone. The Church, while honored by her Lord in all her ten thousand offices of teaching His Truth, has not been commissioned to legislate, but to learn in lowliness from His Divine Statutes. And hence we learn finally,

4. What kind of deference is to be paid in the interpretation of these Statutes to the voice of the Church universal. The voice of single sections of the Church, however imposing from age or numbers, may misguide us. These have foisted many errors on the Scriptures and perseveringly maintained them. The history of their errors is easily traced. They are not the affirmations of the Church universal. But on all the great doctrines of Christianity, on which the very existence of the Church is dependent, a recognition of which the Church has regarded as essential to salvation, the germ of which was planted in the personal teachings of our Lord himself, and the organic growth of which has been uninterrupted from the beginning, the voice of the Church has an authority which is not to be lightly set aside. It is the voice of a united testimony, coming down to us without interruption from the lips of the Lord Himself. Let then the minor differences which now hedge in the compounds of the sects, be tested as best they may by Scripture, and by such testimony of the Church as she can authentically pronounce. But for all that is fundamental in Christianity, for all that distinguishes the Church from the world, the believer from the unbeliever, the voice of the Church of God and of His Holy Scriptures have ever been and must ever remain harmonious and one.

